



*Some local GOP leaders fire up base with conspiracies, lies*

In this Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021 file photo, Trump supporters gather outside the Capitol in Washington.

Associated Press

By G. BURKE, M. MENDOZA, J. LIN-  
DERMAN and L. FENN

Associated Press

A faction of local, county and state Republican officials is pushing lies, misinformation and conspiracy theories that echo those

that helped inspire the violent U.S. Capitol siege, online messaging that is spreading quickly through GOP ranks fueled by algorithms that boost extreme content.

The Associated Press reviewed public and private social media

accounts of nearly 1,000 federal, state, and local elected and appointed Republican officials nationwide, many of whom have voiced support for the Jan. 6 insurrection or demanded that the 2020 presidential election be over-

turned, sometimes in deleted posts or now-removed online forums.

"Sham-peachment," they say, and warn that "corporate America helped rig the election."

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# Some local GOP leaders fire up base with conspiracies, lies



In this Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, photo provided to The Associated Press, Republican Women's Federation of Michigan Vice President Londa Gatt stands with others outside the Capitol building in Washington.

Associated Press

## Continued from Front

They call former president Donald Trump a "savior" who was robbed of a second term — despite no evidence — and President Joe Biden, a "thief." "Patriots want answers," they declare. The bitter, combative rhetoric is helping the officials grow their constituencies on social media and gain outsized influence in their communities, city councils, county boards and state assemblies. And it exposes the GOP's internal struggle over whether the party can include traditional conservative politicians, conspiracy theorists and militias as it builds its base for 2022. Earlier this month, FBI agents visited Republican Women's Federation of Michigan vice president Londa Gatt to ask where she was on the day of the Capitol attack. Gatt, a Bikers for Trump coordinator who roars, leather-vested, alongside political rallies on her Harley-Davidson, had helped organize busloads of Trump

supporters to join her in Washington on Jan. 6. She says she climbed the scaffolding outside the Capitol building that day "to take a picture of the whole view." And she said she gladly told FBI agents that she did nothing wrong, and left the scene right away as things turned violent. Since then, Gatt has shared hashtags tied to QAnon conspiracy theories online and asked her Facebook friends who participated in Capitol intrusions to send messages directly to Trump explaining that he didn't incite them. "The lawyers need our help," she posted. Gatt is among many conservatives organizing on Twitter, Facebook, Parler, Gab and Telegram and is working on a digital strategy under different monikers. "We were cheated out of our legit president and we have no voice because our vote didn't count," she told The Associated Press. "I'm getting ready to start opening up some new pages, focus on getting out people who voted against

Trump and replace those with conservative Republicans." Although some Democrats also have used incendiary and aggressive language online, AP focused its research on the GOP because court documents show the overwhelming number of people arrested in association with the Capitol insurrection are longtime supporters of Trump, who has a huge Republican fan base after leaving office. Working with artificial intelligence company Deep Discovery, AP also helped build a classification algorithm that matched officials to accounts on the right-wing aligned Parler. AP reporters hand-verified each match using an archived Parler dataset provided by New York University researcher Max Aliapoulos containing 13 million user profiles and 183 million posts between August 2018 and January 10, 2021 when Parler was taken offline for several weeks. AP also surveyed officials' use of alternate social media sites

such as Gab and Telegram, whose active users have soared in recent weeks since Twitter and Facebook barred users from posting extremist content and disinformation. Republican National Committee spokeswoman Mandi Merritt didn't answer specific questions about the GOP officials' rhetoric, and instead referred AP to a Jan. 13 statement by Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel: "Violence has no place in our politics. Period." In early December, Idaho's Kootenai County Republican Central Committee Chairman Brent Regan boosted a Parler post: "SIDNEY POWELL'S 'KRAKEN' IS DOD CYBER WARFARE PROGRAM! WE ARE AT WAR!" Powell, a lawyer who had supported Trump, called her legal strategy "the kraken," powerful enough to destroy Biden's presidency. However, the Supreme Court on Monday rejected several cases related to the 2020 election filed by Trump and his allies. Regan has continued posting on Facebook, including on Jan. 16: "The thing I object most about democrats is that they incite my base instincts to retaliate in kind." When AP asked about his posts, Regan said: "My message on social media, print media, and in person is consistent. 'Pray for serenity. Be the eye of the storm. Stay calm. Think clearly. Don't panic. Stay peaceful while demanding integrity and honesty.'" Some Republican officials are posting theories related to QAnon, which the FBI has called a domestic terrorism threat. And the Department of Homeland Security has warned of the potential for lingering violence from extremists enraged by Biden's election and emboldened by the Capitol attack. On Thursday, Homeland Security designated domestic violent extremism as a top priority for the first time, and pledged at least \$77 million to study extremists' use of social media to recruit and radicalize people. Two days after he joined

the Capitol attack, Sacramento, California, Republican Assembly President Jorge Riley, posted on Facebook: "I won't say I stood by. Come take my life. I'm right here." Then he posted his home address, according to court documents, followed by "You all will die." He was arrested for his involvement in the insurrection and forced to resign. Neither Riley nor his attorney responded to requests for comment. Following Trump's acquittal in his second impeachment trial, Mitch McConnell, the Senate's top Republican, called claims the ex-president won the election "wild myths." Still, about two-thirds of Republicans say — contrary to all evidence — that Biden was not legitimately elected president, according to a recent poll by AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Free speech advocates say the legal definition of inciting violence is extremely narrow, and over-policing online posts could undermine democracy. "We need to be very careful about not painting with an overly broad brush what incitement to violence is," said Nora Pelizzari, spokeswoman for the National Coalition Against Censorship. "We can't allow anger at people in power to become punishable." In Arizona and Illinois, prominent Republicans who refused to support Trump's bid to overturn the election have been rebuked by the state GOP and a central committee, respectively. Earlier this month, Manhattan, New York, Republican party chair Andrea Catsimatidis retweeted: "Corporate America helped rig the election." Catsimatidis told AP she believes it is political officials' duty to reach as many people as possible. "Political leaders have influence, and the fact that I have developed a social media following is exactly what you should be doing," she said. "I want to make sure that I can get information out." □



# U.S. Army crowdsources ideas to combat sexual assault crisis

By SARAH BLAKE MORGAN  
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) —

Sgt. Taylor Knueven always knew sexual assault and harassment plagued the U.S. Army. But the combat medic's own assault early last year opened her eyes to the broken system surrounding one of the military's most infamous problems.

Earlier this week, Knueven and six other soldiers stood before a panel inside the 18th Airborne Corps headquarters at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to present ideas on how the Army can revamp the way it deals with sexual assault and harassment.

The Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program has been the subject of much scrutiny, especially following the murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillen by a fellow soldier inside a Fort Hood, Texas, armory last April.

Knueven says many don't take the required SHARP training seriously. "It's a check the box kind of thing."

While it's mandatory, she's watched some with higher ranks blow it off. So, she wants to see the stakes raised.

The plan Knueven presented to the panel Monday would allow zero excuses



In this Monday, Feb. 22, 2021 photo released by the U.S. Army, Sgt. Taylor Knueven pitches an idea to better the U.S. Army's Sexual Harassment and Assault and Prevention Program to a panel at Fort Bragg, N.C.

for missing SHARP training sessions and encourage peer-on-peer pressure to do that right thing.

"This needs to be a priority," she said.

Staff Sgt. Shameka Dudley wants to see stale SHARP training PowerPoints replaced with virtual reality scenarios that would offer soldiers a glimpse at assault and harassment scenarios through the eyes of survivors, aggressors and bystanders.

"We have this same training and it's really not changing

much," Dudley said. "The numbers are still going up." The 28-year-old mother of five handed out virtual reality glasses to the panel as she recounted the success she's seen the method play in the treatment of veterans struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. For her, it's about understanding and empathy.

"The majority of people learn from doing, from seeing, from being able to be there," Dudley said.

Dudley says soldiers who have experienced sexual

trauma can opt out from the training as it may serve as a trigger.

The presentations were made as a part of the 18th Airborne Corps' "Dragon's Lair" series, a "Shark Tank" like competition that sources innovative ideas from within the Army's ranks.

"This is an amazing effort to connect our best and brightest directly to senior leaders who are ready to take action. It just feels different this time," Lt. Col. Scott Stephens, who presented to the panel, tweet-

ed Monday.

The Corps says parts of all seven presentations will be implemented across the Army. Some ideas, like Knueven's will be easier than others and involve simple policy changes, according to Col. Joe Buccino, Public Affairs Officer for the 18th Airborne Corps.

The Corps has already begun conversations with a film producer to bring Dudley's idea to life, according to Buccino.

"I am confident, very confident, we will implement all ideas," he told The Associated Press.

Knueven hopes that's the case. She felt good about her presentation and held nothing back while talking about the night she says she was assaulted by a fellow soldier at a concert last January. She recounted how she felt reporting the incident and what went through her mind when she says she learned he would ultimately face little punishment for his actions.

"I thought it was a total slap in the face to myself, to his other victim," Knueven said.

Knueven wants to see her solution implemented but can't help but wonder if that will happen.

She sighs when asked if change is coming to the Army. "I don't know, I sure hope so." □

Associated Press

# United will pay \$49 million to settle air mail fraud case

By DAVID KOENIG  
AP Airlines Writer

United Airlines will pay more than \$49 million to avoid criminal prosecution and settle civil charges of defrauding the U.S. Postal Service in the delivery of international mail.

The Justice Department said Friday that former employees of United's cargo division falsified parcel-delivery information between 2012 and 2015. Prosecutors said that as a result, United collected millions of dollars in payments that it should not have received.

Chicago-based United agreed to pay nearly \$17.3 million in criminal penalties

and forfeited revenue to end the criminal investigation, according to the Justice Department. The airline will also pay \$32.2 million in related civil penalties.

United issued a one-sentence statement: "The U.S. Postal Service is a valued customer for United, and we are glad to have remedied these procedures and look forward to serving the Postal Service in the future." United's contracts required it to scan mail when it was received, loaded on a plane, and delivered to a foreign country's postal agency. The scans were transmitted back to the U.S. Postal Service. United

faced penalties if mail was delivered late, damaged, or sent to the wrong destination. According to settlement documents, two United managers and two other employees fabricated automated data to make it look like mail was delivered on time. Others, including employees of an IT contractor hired by United, were aware of the scheme. When post office representatives raised questions about the automated data, the manager running the scheme emailed colleagues "we been caught" and changed the group's methods to make the phony information about scans



In this Oct. 14, 2020 file photo, United Airlines employees work at ticket counters in Terminal 1 at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.

Associated Press

appear less suspicious, according to the documents. The Justice Department said United cooperated after getting requests from the department's fraud

section. Prosecutors gave United credit for collecting "voluminous documents" and helping make employees available for interviews. □



# Agency permanently bans fracking near Delaware River

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM  
Associated Press

A regulatory agency that's responsible for the water supply of more than 13 million people in four Northeastern states voted Thursday to permanently ban natural gas drilling and fracking near a crucial waterway, asserting that gas development poses an unacceptable risk.

The Delaware River Basin Commission cited "significant immediate and long-term risks" from gas extraction, saying in a resolution that drillers have "adversely impacted surface-water and groundwater resources, including sources of drinking water, and have harmed aquatic life in some regions."

The ban applies to the entire watershed but, practically speaking, impacts Wayne and Pike counties in Pennsylvania's northeastern tip. Both are part of the nation's largest gas field, the Marcellus Shale. Nearly 13,000 wells have been drilled elsewhere in the vast Marcellus formation, turning Pennsylvania into the nation's No. 2 gas-producing state.

"The fracking ban in the Delaware River Basin is a momentous victory for public health, the environment, and against climate change," said Kimberly Ong, an attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council. Republican state lawmakers in Pennsylvania as well as a landowners group have filed lawsuits challenging the commis-



This Tuesday Dec. 25, 2018 file photo shows the Delaware River at Washington Crossing, Pa.

Associated Press

sion's right to regulate gas development in the watershed. A lawyer for the GOP legislators accused the basin commission, which is controlled by Democrats, of trying to "game the system" by imposing a ban while the litigation is pending. "Certainly my view is that DRBC took this step in direct reaction to what I presume is their fear about our lawsuit," said the lawyer, Matt Haverstick. "I think the right thing for the DRBC to do would be to let the court actions play out, especially since it was content to do nothing for a decade."

Thursday's vote was 4-0, with the federal government's representative abstaining. The other members of the commission are the governors of Pennsylva-

nia, New York, New Jersey and Delaware, or their designees. Drilling opponents have long contended that large-scale gas exploration could not be done safely so close to crucial waterways and renowned fisheries. The Delaware and its tributaries supply drinking water to Philadelphia, half the population of New York City and many other locales. In making permanent a moratorium that had been in place since 2010, the commissioners said they worried about the possibility of uncontrolled methane migration through faults and fractures in the shale, surface spills of toxic fracking fluids and drilling wastewater, and well failures. Gas drillers have damaged at least 374 private water supplies

since arriving in Pennsylvania more than a decade ago. Business and industry groups condemned the ban as an affront to private property rights, and said it was foolhardy to constrain energy production, pointing to last week's deadly blackout in Texas.

"It is quite clear the region and nation rely heavily on Pennsylvania's resources to keep the lights on, and we must oppose any efforts to restrict the production and transmission of our natural resources," said Gene Barr, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry.

Industry officials pointed to studies by a neighboring regulatory agency, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, that found no link between intensive gas

drilling in the Marcellus and degradation of the watershed. "There is no support to any claim that drilling results in widespread impacts to drinking water, rivers or groundwater," Barr said. "This was a political decision uninformed by science."

Energy companies combine horizontal drilling with hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, a technique that injects vast amounts of water, along with sand and chemicals, underground to break up the gas-bearing shale. The drilling methods spurred a U.S. production boom in shale gas and oil. The basin commission had spent years developing environmental regulations for the gas industry before reversing course in 2017 and signaling it would enact a permanent ban.

Maya van Rossum, who leads the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, an environmental watchdog group, hailed Thursday's vote as a "huge victory" but said more work remains. The commissioners stripped out draft provisions that could have allowed the industry to draw water from the river and its tributaries for hydraulic fracturing outside the region, and to dispose of fracking wastewater within the Delaware watershed.

The commissioners, instead, ordered DRBC staff to develop separate regulations. Those regulations could turn into a prohibition, which is what environmentalists are pushing. □

## Woman in international same-sex child custody case in court

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) —** A woman charged with fleeing the United States for Nicaragua with her daughter rather than share custody with her former same-sex partner pleaded not guilty Friday back in Buffalo, New York, the city from which the mother and daughter allegedly departed.

Lisa Miller, 52, entered the pleas in federal court in Buffalo to charges of conspiracy and international parental kidnapping.

Miller waived her right to a detention hearing and will remain in cus-

tody, although she reserved the right to seek a hearing in the future, said Barbara Burns, a spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York.

A phone number for an attorney for Miller could not immediately be found. Miller and Janet Jenkins of Fair Haven, Vermont, were joined in a Vermont civil union in 2000, shortly after the state became the first in the country to recognize same-sex relationships. The two women had a child through artificial insemination in

2002 and later broke up. Miller, the biological mother, moved to Virginia and was given custody, with the Vermont family court granting Jenkins the right to visit the child.

But Miller refused to comply with the court orders granting visitation. Prosecutors say Lisa Miller and her daughter left their home in Winchester, Virginia, in 2009 when it became clear Miller would lose custody of Isabella, who is now an adult, and traveled to Buffalo. From there, they crossed into

Canada and later flew from Toronto to Nicaragua.

Miller returned to the United States from Nicaragua last month and was arrested in Miami.

Isabella Miller turned 18 last year. She remains in Nicaragua, but said in court documents filed in federal court in Vermont earlier this month she would return to the United States, "if (and when) I desire."

Jenkins' Vermont lawyer Sarah Star declined Friday to comment on Miller's court appearance. □



# U.S. strike, first under Biden, kills Iran-backed militiaman

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA,  
LOLITA C. BALDOR and  
ROBERT BURNS

Associated Press

**BAGHDAD (AP)** — A U.S. airstrike in Syria targeted facilities belonging to a powerful Iranian-backed Iraqi armed group, killing one fighter and wounding several others, an Iraqi militia official said Friday, signaling the first military action undertaken by U.S. President Joe Biden.

Pentagon officials said the strikes were retaliation for recent attacks on U.S. interests in Iraq, including a rocket attack in northern Iraq on Feb. 15 that killed one civilian contractor and wounded a U.S. service member and other coalition troops.

John Kirby, the Pentagon's chief spokesman, said Friday that two Air Force F-15E aircraft launched seven missiles, fully destroying nine facilities and heavily damaging two other facilities, rendering the two "functionally destroyed." He said the facilities, at "entry control points" on the border, had been used by militia groups the U.S. deems responsible for a number of recent attacks against U.S. interests in Iraq.

Kirby said the facilities hit in the attack were near Boukamal, on the Syrian side of the Iraq border, along the Euphrates River.

"This location is known to facilitate Iranian-aligned militia group activity," he said. He added that the U.S. has preliminary information about casualties at the attack site, but he declined to release any details pending the completion of a broader assessment of damage inflicted. He described the site as a "compound" that previously had been used by the Islamic State group when it held sway in the area.

The Iraqi militia official told The Associated Press that the strikes against the Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, hit an area along the border between the Syrian site of Boukamal facing Qaim on the Iraqi side.

He spoke on condition



Pentagon spokesman John Kirby speaks during a media briefing at the Pentagon, Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak of the attack. Syria war monitoring groups said the strikes hit trucks moving weapons to a base for Iranian-backed militias in Boukamal.

"I'm confident in the target that we went after, we know what we hit," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters flying with him from California to Washington, shortly after the airstrikes which were carried out Thursday evening Eastern Standard Time. The Biden administration in its first weeks has emphasized its intent to put more focus on the challenges posed by China, even as Mideast threats persist. Biden's decision to attack in Syria did not appear to signal an intention to widen U.S. military involvement in the region but rather to demonstrate a will to defend U.S. troops in Iraq and send a message to Iran.

The U.S. has in the past targeted facilities in Syria belonging to Kataeb Hezbollah, which it has blamed for numerous attacks targeting U.S. personnel and interests in Iraq. The Iraqi Kataeb is separate from the Lebanese Hezbollah movement. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based group that monitors the war in Syria, said the

strikes targeted a shipment of weapons that were being taken by trucks entering Syrian territories from Iraq. The group said 22 fighters from the Popular Mobilization Forces, an Iraqi umbrella group of mostly Shiite paramilitaries that includes Kataeb Hezbollah, were killed.

The report could not be independently verified.

In a statement, the group confirmed one of its fighters was killed and said it reserved the right to retaliate, without elaborating. Kataeb Hezbollah, like other Iranian-backed factions, maintains fighters in Syria to both fight against the Islamic State group and assist Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces in that country's civil war.

Defense Secretary Austin said he was "confident" the U.S. had hit back at the "the same Shia militants that conducted the strikes," referring to a Feb. 15 rocket attack in northern Iraq that killed one civilian contractor and wounded a U.S. service member and other coalition personnel. Austin said he had recommended the action to President Biden.

"We said a number of times that we will respond on our timeline,"

Austin said. "We wanted to be sure of the connectivity

and we wanted to be sure that we had the right targets."

Earlier, Kirby said the U.S. action was a "proportionate military response" taken together with diplomatic measures, including consultation with coalition partners.

"The operation sends an unambiguous message: President Biden will act to protect American and coalition personnel," Kirby said.

Kirby said the U.S. airstrikes "destroyed multiple facilities at a border control point used by a number of Iranian-backed militant groups," including Kataeb Hezbollah and Kataeb Sayyid al-Shuhada.

Further details were not immediately available.

Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School, criticized the U.S. attack as a violation of international law.

"The United Nations Charter makes absolutely clear that the use of military force on the territory of a foreign sovereign state is lawful only in response to an armed attack on the defending state for which the target state is responsible," she said. "None of those elements is met in the Syria strike."

Syria condemned the U.S. strike calling it "a cowardly

and systematic American aggression," warning that the attack will lead to consequences.

"This aggression is a negative indication of the policies of the new American administration, which is supposed to adhere to international legitimacy, not to the law of the jungle," a statement by Syria's foreign ministry said.

Biden administration officials condemned the Feb. 15 rocket attack near the city of Irbil in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish-run region, but as recently as this week officials indicated they had not determined for certain who carried it out.

Kirby had said Tuesday that Iraq is in charge of investigating the Feb. 15 attack. He added that U.S. officials were not then able to give a "certain attribution as to who was behind these attacks."

A little-known Shiite militant group calling itself Saraya Alwiya al-Dam, Arabic for Guardians of Blood Brigade, claimed responsibility for the Feb. 15 attack. A week later, a rocket attack in Baghdad's Green Zone appeared to target the U.S. Embassy compound, but no one was hurt.

Iran this week said it has no links to the Guardians of Blood Brigade. Iran-backed groups have splintered significantly since the U.S.-directed strike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad more than a year ago. Both were key in commanding and controlling a wide array of Iran-backed groups operating in Iraq.

Since their deaths, the militias have become increasingly unruly. Some analysts argue the armed groups have splintered as a tactic to claim attacks under different names to mask their involvement.

U.S. forces have been significantly reduced in Iraq to 2,500 personnel and no longer partake in combat missions with Iraqi forces in ongoing operations against the Islamic State group. □



# Ex-Scottish leader testifies as sex case tears party apart

By DANICA KIRKA

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Former Scottish leader Alex Salmond on Friday criticized the government of his successor and one-time friend for undermining democratic principles and the rule of law, in the latest episode of a political tug of war that threatens to tear apart Scotland's independence movement. Salmond's comments came as he testified to a committee of the Scottish parliament investigating the government's handling of sexual harassment allegations against him. Scotland's highest civil court ruled in 2019 that the government had acted unlawfully, and awarded Salmond more than 500,000 pounds (\$695,000) in legal expenses. Salmond criticized his successor, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, for allowing the distinctions between her government, the Scottish National Party and the civil service to become blurred, amid suggestions that she intentionally sought to destroy his reputation. The government and civil service have systematically tried to avoid public scrutiny by refusing to turn over evidence requested by parlia-



Former Scottish leader Alex Salmond makes his opening statement to a committee of the Scottish parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh, Friday Feb. 26, 2021.

ment, he said.

"The move to independence, which I have sought all my political life and continue to seek, must be accompanied by institutions whose leadership is strong and robust and capable of protecting each and every citizen from arbitrary authority," Salmond told lawmakers. "Such a principle is a central component of the rule of law." The long-awaited testimony was postponed

earlier this week after the national prosecutors' office expressed concerns about Salmond's written evidence. The documents were removed from the parliament's website and later republished with some sections redacted, paving the way for Salmond's appearance on Friday. In 2019, Salmond was charged with sexual assault and attempted rape after allegations by nine women who had worked with him

as first minister, or for the party. Salmond called the charges "deliberate fabrications for a political purpose," and was acquitted after a trial in March 2020. Sturgeon is scheduled to give testimony to the committee next week. The two have traded accusations for months over who knew what and when about the allegations against Salmond. Salmond accuses people within the SNP and Stur-

geon's government of a "malicious and concerted effort" to sideline him and damage his reputation. He also says Sturgeon lied about her meetings with him and violated the code of conduct for government ministers. If that were found to be true, she could be forced to resign.

Salmond claimed there is "no doubt" Sturgeon broke the rules on ministerial conduct, but stopped short of saying she should resign. The long-running case has been a "nightmare," Salmond said, adding that he would like to stop talking about the events in question, which have damaged his reputation and wounded him personally.

"The reason I'm here today is because we can't turn that page, nor move on until the decision making undermining the system of government in Scotland is addressed," he said. "The competence and professionalism of the civil service matters. ... Democratic accountability through parliamentary matters. Suppressing evidence from parliamentary committees matters." Sturgeon earlier this week accused her predecessor of making "wild claims" about a conspiracy. □

Associated Press

## China, India urge further measures to ease border tensions



In this image taken from video footage run Feb. 19, 2021 by China's CCTV via AP Video, Indian and Chinese troops face off in the Galwan Valley on the disputed border between China and India, June 15, 2020.

Associated Press

**BEIJING (AP)** — The foreign ministers of China and India are urging further steps to stabilize tensions along their disputed border following the pullback of forces from an area where

a deadly clash broke out last summer. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar, on Thursday that the disengagement by front-line

troops had "significantly eased the situation" and that now is the time to maintain the momentum of consultations, build trust and "achieve peace and tranquility in the border areas," his ministry said. In a statement Friday, Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the two sides "should now quickly resolve the remaining issues" along the Line of Actual Control high in the mountainous Ladakh region. He said that with their forces disengaging at friction points, "the two sides could also look at broader de-escalation of troops in the area and work towards restoration of peace and tranquility." China said last week that

four of its soldiers were killed in the June 2020 clash, the first time Beijing has publicly conceded its side suffered casualties. The fighting was the deadliest incident between the Asian giants in nearly 45 years. Immediately after the June 2020 clash on a high ridge in the Ladakh region's Galwan Valley, India announced it had lost 20 of its soldiers in a battle in which fists, clubs, stones and other improvised weapons were used to avoid a fire-fight. That led to multiple rounds of talks, and a breakthrough appeared to have been achieved at a September meeting between the two ministers in

Moscow.

Troops began to withdraw on Feb. 10 from the southern and northern banks of Pangong Lake and have pulled back to the positions they held prior to the start of tensions last year. Troops reportedly remain in a standoff in Depsang and at least two other places, Gogra and Hot Springs. Each side accused the other of instigating the violence, which has further strained a difficult relationship dating partly from a 1962 border war. The fiercely contested Line of Actual Control stretches from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety. □



# Michael Somare, Papua New Guinea's 1st prime minister, dies

By **ROD McGUIRK**

**Associated Press**

**CANBERRA, Australia (AP)**

— Michael Somare, a pivotal figure in Papua New Guinea's independence and the South Pacific island nation's first prime minister, has died. He was 84.

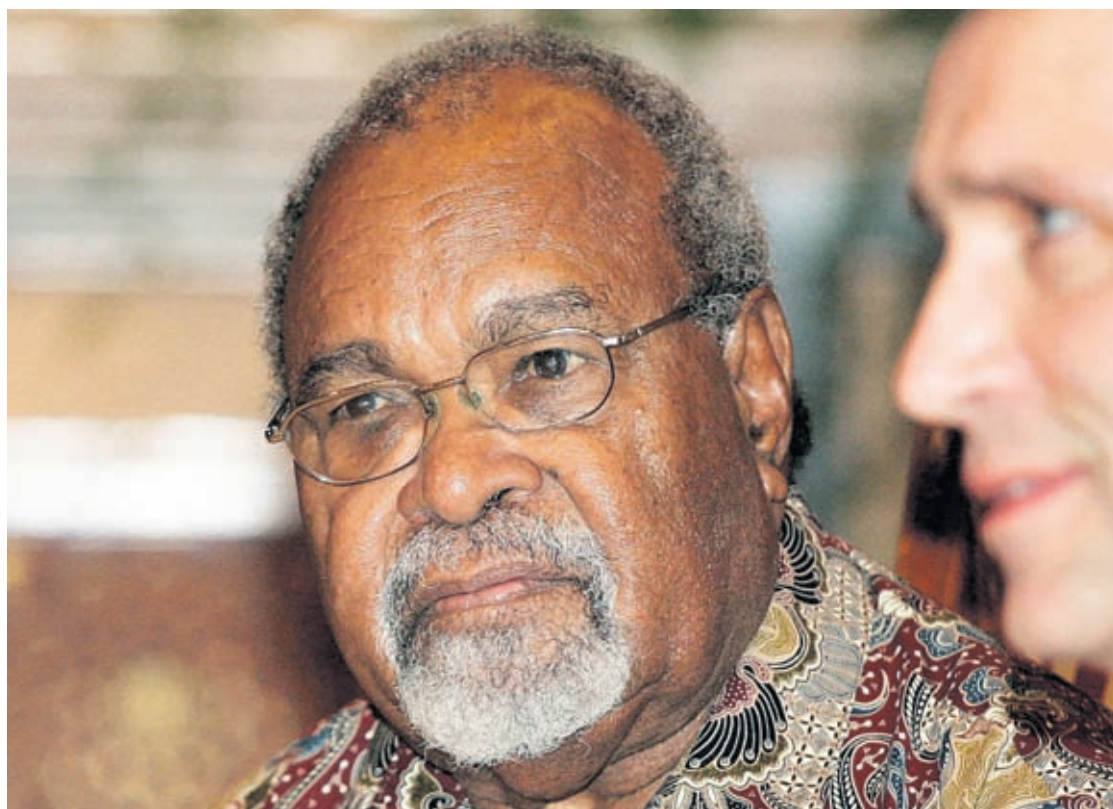
Somare was Papua New Guinea's longest-serving leader after it became independent of Australia in 1975. He was prime minister for 17 years during four separate periods.

He died Friday after being diagnosed with a late-stage pancreatic cancer and admitted to a hospital on Feb. 19, his daughter Betha Somare said.

"Sir Michael was a loyal husband to our mother and great father first to her children, then grandchildren and great granddaughter. But we are endeared that many Papua New Guineans equally embraced Sir Michael as father and grandfather," she said.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said that Somare "is unmatched by anyone who has come after him."

"I appeal to our citizens and residents for a week of silence, peace and calm as we pay respect to this one person whom our country owes so much," Marape said. "He is univer-



In this Dec. 13, 2007, file photo, then Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Michael Somare, left, along with Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, partly seen at right, attends a lunch meeting with heads of states attending the U.N. Climate Conference in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia.

**Associated Press**

sally loved in our country, may his memory bind out nation still."

Cabinet will meet later Friday to announce details of a state funeral for the leader who was also known as Papua New Guinea's Grand Chief and Father of the Nation.

Police Commissioner David Manning said police would ensure that Papua New Guineans mourn peacefully and that "opportunists

do not take this sad day in our history to create fear and panic."

Political differences can lead to violence in Papua New Guinea where elections are often accompanied by riots.

"Grand Chief Sir Michael believed in the unity of this nation of a thousand tribes and gave his life to this cause," Manning said. "He stood up when it mattered against the colonial

masters and a world filled with racism, ignorance and hatred and dedicated his life to bring about a united and independent nation." Somare was born on April 9, 1936, in the city of Rabaul in East New Britain, which was occupied by Japan during World War II. His earliest education was in a Japanese-run school in the village of Karau where he learned to read and write in Japanese. He was raised

the son of a police officer in the province of East Sepik, which he went on to represent in Parliament.

Ron May, emeritus fellow at the Australian National University's Department of Pacific Affairs and a Papua New Guinea expert, said Somare was one of the Pacific's most prominent and respected leaders.

"Papua New Guinea made a smooth transition to independence in 1975, with Somare as prime minister, confounding those in Australia and elsewhere who had predicted political and economic collapse," May recently wrote. "It remains one of a fairly small number of post-colonial states that have maintained an unbroken record of democracy." Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Somare was a "towering figure in the history of Papua New Guinea." "As a driving force in the development of Papua New Guinea's national constitution, and the nation's first and longest-serving prime minister, Sir Michael has an unparalleled place in the history of Papua New Guinea," Morrison said. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Somare had been an "influential figure" during a "remarkable five decades" in Parliament. □

## 8 dead, including prison director, after Haiti jail break

By **EVENS SANON**

**Associated Press**

**CROIX-DES-BOUQUETS, Haiti (AP)**

— A prison director was among at least eight people killed on Thursday after several inmates tried to escape from a prison in Haiti's capital, a police officer and witnesses said.

The incident occurred in northeast Port-au-Prince at the Croix-des-Bouquets Civil Prison, which was built by Canada in 2012 and is known for a 2014 breakout in which more than 300 inmates escaped.

Residents in the area who declined to be identified

out of concern for their safety told The Associated Press that they observed a group of heavily armed men start shooting at prison guards before the inmates began to flee.

Gunshots could still be heard from within the prison several hours after the shooting began.

The police officer who confirmed the killing of the prison director to the AP, and declined to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said authorities were preparing to raid the prison and described the inmates as armed and

dangerous.

At the time of the 2014 breakout, the prison held 899 inmates, some 130 over its capacity.

During Thursday's incident, one escapee, 37-year-old Jhon Hippolyte, was shot in the back. He told the AP that he was serving a sentence for murder and was in the infirmary when he noticed everybody running and decided to join them. AP journalists saw the bodies of at least seven men along streets near the prison. They had been shot. Their identities were not immediately available, and it wasn't clear if they were



Recaptured inmates are escorted by police back to the Croix-des-Bouquets Civil Prison after an attempted breakout, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021.

**Associated Press**

inmates or who had killed them. Video captured by residents shows one police officer leading a group of men tied together with a

rope. It wasn't immediately clear if they were inmates. Authorities could not be immediately reached for comment. □



# LOCAL



## Take a seat on the Social Sofa

**EAGLE BEACH** —Omaira Silva is well-known for her masterpieces. The most popular piece, the precious iguana, can be seen at the Aruba's airport. Now, she is finalizing another piece of art the 'Mosaic Social Sofa' at Eagle Beach.

Back in November of 2020, Silva received a phone call from Felipe Da Silva of the MOTA group in charge of the WVB Watty Vos Boulevard, stating that his company needed to install an artistic cement bench to finalize the Eagle Beach Park. Silva was excited and presented immediately the Mosaic Social Sofa project that she knew off and was personally introduced to while visiting Europe in March 2019. During her visit in Europe she located several Mosaic Social Sofas in several cities and communities. Photos were sent to Da Silva and it was a done deal. She would cover or as she calls it 'upholster' the cement bench in Mosaic Art and the theme would be our local Flora & Fauna. The project would have a duration of 6 weeks. Silva started the project on January 17, 2021 and is now in the final week of completion.

Silva also had introduced the Mosaic Social Sofa to Aruba Art Fair, Tito Bolivar for the section Ban Mosaik project in July 2019, which she is a member of. Having done two Mosaic Art project murals in San Nicolas for the Aruba Art Fair, in September 2016 the Carnival Nymph alongside renowned Chilean Mosaic Artist Isidora Paz Lopez and Carolina Kawal, an Ceramist from Brazil and the 'Cocolishi' Angel Wings in November 2019 as a

solo project for which international Mosaic artist Kim Wozniak and Laura Rendlen were invited. Silva was assisted also by model Sandra Vega for this project. However, due to Covid-19 all came to a halt. Therefor the excitement to do this project on Eagle Beach is understandable.

### About the design Flora & Fauna

- Our Shoko, the Aruban Burrowing Owl, (*Athene cunicularia rubensis*) declared our National Symbol in 2012.
- The orange Trupiaal, is also called the Venezuelan troupial and can be found in this region, Curacao and Bonaire,
- The Ruby Topaz Hummingbird for its bright pearly reddish colors and rounded tails and is bigger than the blue tailed emerald,
- The Caribbean Parakeet for us Prikichi (*Aratinga pertinax arubensis*) has become the National Bird of Aruba,
- Our Bariga Geel 'chibichibi' aka Bananaquit or Suikerdieffe, or referred as the chickadee of the Caribbean.
- The Kododo blaw (Cnemidophorus arubensis) Aruban Whiptail Lizard aka 'renhagedis' as they swiftly disappear, just love those bright blue spots.
- Our Iguana, locally better known as nos Yuwana, an adult iguana's color normally is a grayish green, while a young iguana is a bright neon green
- The Monarch Butterfly and the small yellow butterflies that always dart in every garden,
- Flora: The greenery in different shades of green our local flora,



Kadushi Largo, the Prickly Pear/barbari fig, glass pebbles and marbles for the sparkle, the Bushi Cacti, the Aloe Vera giving it different shades of green and blue, Shrubs and Hedges as background and also added the tropical Hibiscus/Cayena Red flower to bring some more color into this project. The dark green evergreen type leaves. The White Periwinkle flowers or Vinca, as they grow wild on our island and for sure in many gardens. She also added a few yellow Wanglo flowers under the iguana located on the front of the bench, to take it a little out of the camouflage.

Every piece of ceramic tile is hand cut with much detail, placed with precision, passion, dedication, patience, hard work grouting, polishing and all with love for the art to bring it all together.

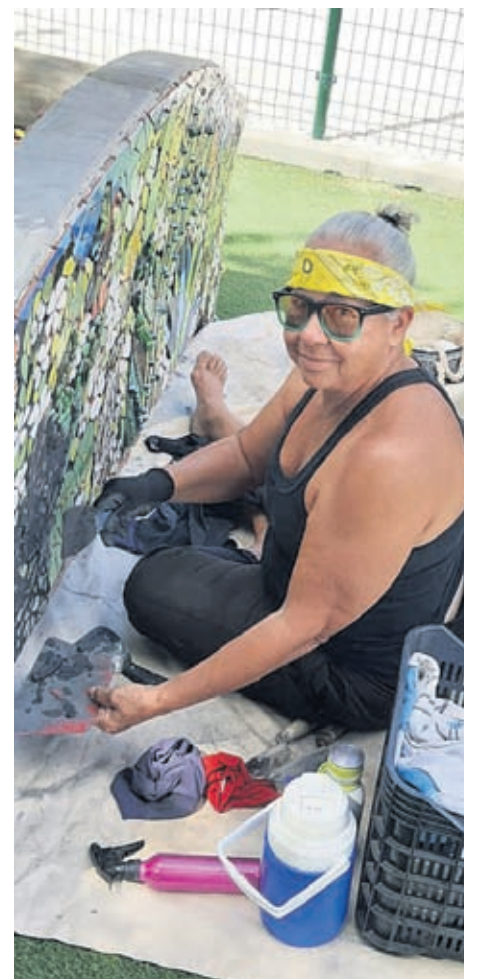
The selection of the local flora & fauna for this social sofa project was done in a playful, colorful whimsical approach as hope to contribute and help to boost awareness of nature on Aruba to ensure that especially our national birds do not disappear from the Aruban landscape. Most of the detailed mosaic art was created in her home studio and installed on location at the Eagle Beach Park, which attracted many visitors and created many social gatherings. Silva is pleasantly amazed how children interact with the art work, it pleases her immensely.

Just to imagine, parents sitting on a piece of art, stylish bench watching their kids play in the play park, or just when one is on a break from work to sit back and relax or read a book, or just sit in the sun, join a friend for a conversation and sud-

denly the Mosaic Social Sofa becomes an extension of one's living room.

Silva's dream is to have many Mosaic Social Sofas around the island in communities, bus stops, on a square, schools, mall or downtown created with the members of the community, a great team/friendship building moments.

Her wish is for everyone to preserve our Mosaic Social Sofa, to use extra caution as tiles do break, crack, chip or get damaged, to use TLC, no sharp objects, or use it as a resting place for bicycles, to be socially responsible for this Mosaic Social Sofa to last and be preserved for a long time, just like any equipment in the park. □





## MONDAY MADNESS AND BINGO ARE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

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## The 'seroprevalence research' continues

ORANJESTAD — For the department of public health it is extremely important to know the percentage of people in our community who have already contracted the Covid-19 virus. A 'seroprevalence research' is being conducted which consists of a blood test being taken from different persons in the community to see if they have anti bodies for the virus SARS-CoV-2 which causes the Covid-19. People of all ages, gender and different districts are being tested.

Recently, the Department of Public Health send out a total of 2.854 invitations to dif-

ferent households asking for collaboration for this research. This research is for a good cause and very well needed.

If you are one of the persons who received this invitation you will need to go to <https://form.labhoh.app/>, register and login onto the Aruba Health App, insert the code received in your invitation letter and follow instructions. Your participation to this research is very appreciated.

For more information on this please contact the department of public health at 280.0101 or send an email to [callcenter-dvg@gmail.com](mailto:callcenter-dvg@gmail.com). □



## Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is .....  
Send your picture with that text (including your

name and where you are from) to: [news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. □



For today we received these amazing stories.

**Barry and Connie Robb** from Steubenville, Ohio. They wrote:  
Aruba to me is like seeing an old friend again after the wild year we have all had. We appreciate being here and look forward to spending our time in Paradise.



**Anthony & Marilyn Dionizio.** They wrote:

"We have been coming to Aruba since 1993 missed only 2 years. We have a time share at the Aruba Phoenix and we stay for 3 weeks in March. We love it here and the people are the best, along with the weather. We look forward to coming every year."



## Fasting, Religious Wisdom

By: Dr. Carlos Viana

**SANTA CRUZ — Religious dietary recommendations, sometimes prohibitions, like folk sayings and remedies have an uncanny insight into the human condition. As a clinical nutritionist, I enjoy trying to unravel the basis for these laws. Likewise, I am interested in traditional methods of cooking foods. Why do spinach and potatoes or cloves and ham seem to go so naturally together? Spinach, a great natural source of iron, contains oxalic acid which can raise uric acid and aggravate a gout attack. However, cooked and eaten with potatoes, the alkalizing quality of potatoes reduces inflammation and prevents a uric acid reaction. Meanwhile, everyone knows that pork has to be cooked well because these animals may more easily become infected with bacteria and parasites. Cloves, used traditional pork recipes, have natural oils that kill bacteria and parasites. Interestingly, reflecting the dietary prohibitions of the Old Testament, clinically, we have found pork to be detrimental to all metabolic blood types.**

Spring reminds me that every major world religion and many indigenous belief systems incorporate fasting. "Fasting" means abstaining from food or some types of food. The idea of the fasting in spring has been fixed firmly in all religious disciplines as a mechanism to purify oneself and become more receptive to their deity's message. The Christian Bible has thirty-three passages about fasting during what they call the Lenten season. Pope John Paul II stated that Penitential fasting is therapy for the soul. In fact, for Catholics all days of Lent are supposed to be fasting days. Muslims throughout the world will be fasting during the sacred month of Ramadan. The Jewish fast of the firstborn takes place in the spring, during Passover.

As a natural physician I am aware that beyond religious faith, fasting is an ancient healing strategy. Many traditional cultures, including Oriental,

East Indian, and Native American, have long regarded short periods of abstaining from food as curative and revitalizing. Hippocrates prescribed fasting. Fasting was practiced by Plato, Socrates and Mahatma Gandhi. In modern Europe, clinics that support therapeutic fasting are quite common. In Sweden it's practically a national sport. Eating once a day, intermittent fasting is proven to boost brain health and lower your risk for brain diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. For one, it reduces obesity and can help protect against diabetes — both increase your risk for developing Alzheimer's. Proponents of fasting offer thousands of testimonials from recovered asthmatics, arthritics, insomniacs, ex-sufferers of migraines, skin, digestive disorders, and other ailments. They maintain that apart from serious conditions like tuberculosis, ulcers, diabetes, hypoglycemia, blood, liver, kidney and heart diseases- systematic voluntary abstention from eating is almost always a healthy first response to illness. One of my medical heroes whose influence prompted me to become a colon hydrotherapist, Dr. Bernard Jensen, has supervised over 50,000 fasts at his center in Escondido, CA.

There are two kinds of fasting. The "water fast" induces rapid internal purification but shocks the system. Dr. Rudolph Ballentine, MD., author of "Diet & Nutrition - A Holistic Approach," says that the average American lacks the proper reserve nutrients necessary for healthy water fast. Dr. Ballentine recommends a supervised, gradual "juice fast" using natural vegetable and fruit juices to provide essential vitamins to sustain metabolism, and minerals which neutralize and removed toxins that are released. Although abstaining from food is often not as difficult as you may imagine, it is useful to plan. Having medical supervision is the safest way to start your fast. Fasting is not recommended at times of high stress. During the first two days, when you may feel weak and out of sorts, it's nice to be able to



be with supportive loved ones, and to rest when you feel like it. Acupuncture works very well to support you through this "rough" period.

One should begin to reduce portion amounts and eat lighter foods several days before all solid food is eliminated. While fasting, be sure to drink enough water to internally wash the system. Enough is: 1 qt/ 90 lbs of body weight (1 lt./each 30kg). Colonic irrigation not only augments the cleansing process, it also helps to hydrate the body.

At Viana Healing Center we routinely supervise patients through a fast where, besides water, only brown rice is eaten for two weeks. Eating no proteins or fats, your body will begin to quickly break down its own excess deposits. This not only helps with weight loss, but we've seen it drastically improve skin, allergies, colon and other problems. The duration of a fast depends on one's medical condition, body weight, lifestyle and other individual factors. In many of our supervised patients, we combine the brown rice fast with periods of taking light, natural foods, almost exclusively vegetables.

If you are one of the people on the list above, not healthy enough to completely fast, but would like to eliminate or reduce certain food for religious or health reasons, be sure to be checked by a professional. Consult with a clinical nutritionist to help you make the right food choices in the safest way. Sometimes, eliminating red meat, dairy and/or gluten containing products like wheat, can drastically improve your health. Adding dietary supplements might be recommended. Always read labels to make sure your vitamins are free from artificial or unwanted ingredients like sugar and starch fillers.

Get the Point! As a student of ecclesiastical discipline I see that the religious obligation of fasting is rarely observed in its integrity nowadays. What a pity, fasting brings into harmony our mind, soul and body. Fasting and abstaining from excessive food results in the lightening of the capabilities of the mind and the soul.□





# What free college might actually look like

By **ANNA HELHOSKI** of NerdWallet

President Joe Biden proposed multiple “free college” measures while on the campaign trail. Do any of them have a real shot? Some experts think so.

“The issue is bipartisan in its appeal, economically effective and supported by the leadership in today’s Congress and administration — that’s (a) pretty good triple play,” says Morley Winograd, president of The Campaign for Free College Tuition.

“I have a really hard time seeing any sort of four-year free college program passing at this point,” says Douglas Webber, associate professor of economics at Temple University.

The first glimpse of a formal proposal will most likely be in Biden’s upcoming budget, experts say. Here’s what to look for.

## TUITION-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS MOST LIKELY

“Free college” really means free tuition. Students would still have to pay for room and board, along with other costs of attendance such as transportation, books and supplies. The average cost for room and board is \$11,386 at a four-year school and \$7,636 at a two-year school, according to federal data.

President Biden’s free college proposals include:

—Four years tuition-free at



In this Feb. 17, 2021 file photo, students walk on the Boston College campus in Boston.

Associated Press

public colleges for those whose family income is under \$125,000.

—Two years of free tuition for low- and middle-income students attending minority-serving institutions.

—Tuition-free public community colleges.

That last one is the easiest sell, experts say.

“We’ve seen how much free community college has become more popular,” says Wesley Whistle, senior advisor for policy and strategy with the Education Policy program at New America, a public policy think tank. “It became a drum and you hear it and that helps it pick up over

time.”

The primary blocker for any tuition-free program is the cost, experts say, as any such program would likely be funded through a federal-state partnership.

Community college is the cheaper bill to foot: The cost to fund tuition at public two-year schools is around \$8.8 billion compared with about \$72.5 billion at four-year public schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

## HOW ‘FREE’ COLLEGE MIGHT WORK

There’s already a blueprint for tuition-free programs: Currently 15 states have

a program in place, while several others have extensive scholarship programs. Some cities do, too.

Most state programs, such as Tennessee Promise and the Excelsior Scholarship in New York, which both offer four years of tuition-free public college, are last-dollar. That means students must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, and accept all need-based federal and state aid before the tuition-free benefit kicks in.

Most experts say a federally enacted program would likely be first-dollar, covering tuition costs before any other aid is applied.

That could increase the per-student impact of scholarships and state funding, says Edward Conroy, associate director of institutional transformation for the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice. “If we get a federal program that says we’re going to make tuition free and you can still receive any state or federal grants on top of that, that would be a robust program,” Conroy says. In that case, additional aid could go toward paying for additional expenses.

## PELL GRANT EXPANSION MAY BE EASIER

There’s another path toward tuition-free college, though it doesn’t have “free” in the name: the Pell Grant.

The Pell Grant program provides students who have demonstrated need with free aid; for 2021-22, it’s up to \$6,495. Though the Pell was meant to cover most college costs, it hasn’t kept up — the average tuition and fees at four-year public schools is \$9,212, according to the most recent federal data.

Most experts say doubling the maximum Pell Grant would effectively create free tuition and in some cases cover additional expenses. Biden has called for this, along with expanding eligibility to cover more middle-income students. □

# McPlant and more: Beyond Meat inks McDonald’s, Yum deals

**EL SEGUNDO, Calif. (AP)**

— Plant-based food company Beyond Meat will be partnering with several major fast-food chains in the coming years to expand offerings that could eventually include plant-based burgers, chalupas or toppings on a stuffed-crust pizza.

Beyond Meat on Thursday announced distribution agreements with McDonald’s as well as with Yum Brands, the parent company of KFC, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut.

The company based in El Segundo, California, said it will develop plant-based

products for all the restaurants, with exclusive menu items for each brand.

Beyond Meat had limited partnerships with McDonald’s and Yum Brands before, testing its products in limited geographies or with only an item or two. The companies are now expanding those ties.

Chicago-based McDonald’s will use the Beyond Meat partnership to roll out what it is calling the “McPlant” burger, as well as eventually plant-based pork, egg and chicken products.

Yum will use Beyond Meat to expand its “Beyond Fried

Chicken” products, as well as pizza toppings at Pizza Hut. Yum, which is based in Louisville, Kentucky, did not lay out specific menu options for Taco Bell.

Plant-based food products that are designed to imitate meat have grown in popularity in the last few years and several large restaurant chains are now experimenting with food science to make healthier and more environmentally friendly products for customers. Burger King has partnered with Impossible Foods to provide products that use plant-based products as well. □



In this June 27, 2019, file photo, a meatless burger patty called Beyond Burger by Beyond Meat is displayed at a grocery store in Richmond, Va.

Associated Press



# UN: Carbon-cutting pledges by countries nowhere near enough



In this Saturday, Jan. 2, 2021 file photo, the morning sun is seen through a blanket of smog on the outskirts of New Delhi, India. **Associated Press**

**By SETH BORENSTEIN**  
**AP Science Writer**

The newest pledges by countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions are falling far short of what's needed to limit global warming to what the Paris climate accord seeks, a new United Nations report finds. So the U.N.'s climate chief is telling nations to go back and try harder.

Most countries — especially top carbon polluters China, United States and India — missed the Dec. 31 deadline for submitting official emission-cutting targets for November's climate negotiations in Scotland. Friday's report provides an incomplete snapshot of the world's efforts: The world's pledges so far are only enough to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions

to less than 1% below 2010 levels by 2030.

The world has to cut carbon pollution 45% below 2010 levels to achieve the more stringent official Paris goal of limiting future warming to another half a degree (0.3 degrees Celsius) from now, U.N. officials said.

"We are very, very far from where we need to be," U.N. climate chief Patricia Espinosa said. "What we need to put on the table is much more radical and much more transformative than we have been doing until now."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the report "a red alert for our planet."

U.N. officials applauded the more than 120 nations, including the U.S. and China, that have made longer-term goals of net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century. But those same nations must translate long-term talk into the immediate action "that people and the planet so desperately need," Guterres said. Instead of limiting the world to only 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial

times — the more stringent of two Paris accord goals — the data shows that world "is headed to close to 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) and a global catastrophe if this is not curtailed quickly," said Bill Hare, director of Climate Analytics, a private group that tracks countries' emissions targets.

The 2015 Paris climate agreement had nations submit voluntary targets for how much heat-trapping gases they would spew by 2025 and update them every five years.

With the big pandemic-delayed climate negotiations in Glasgow set for later this year, nations are supposed to submit updated and tougher goals for 2030. The U.S., the second biggest carbon polluter behind China, promises its goal will be announced before a special Earth Day summit in April.

Fewer than half of the world's countries, accounting for 30% of the world's carbon emissions, submitted targets by the deadline. Only seven of the top 15 carbon polluting nations had done so.

At least 10 countries that submitted goals last year did not provide tougher goals, Hare said. And because of changes to emissions in its base year calculations, Brazil essentially weakened its target from its 2015 version, said Taryn Fransen, a senior fellow at the think tank World Resources Institute.

and prime engineer of the Paris agreement, Christiana Figueres, said she thinks the U.S., China and Japan can change the picture when they announce their goals: "I have high hopes they will deliver."

China and the United States, with 35% of the world's carbon emissions, can make a huge difference with their targets, Fransen said, noting that the U.S. can pledge to cut emissions in half from 2005 baseline levels by 2030 and can achieve that with concerted action.

The goal the Obama Administration submitted in 2015 was to cut emissions 26% to 28% from 2005 levels by 2025. When he was president, Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the agreement, but President Joe Biden put the country back in.

After dramatic decreases in carbon pollution in early 2020 because of the pandemic lockdown, initial data shows that near end-of-the-year emissions were back up to 2019 levels, pushed by China's industrial production, said Corinne LeQuere, who tracks emissions at the University of East Anglia.

The world adopted the more stringent 1.5 degree Celsius temperature goal in 2015 at the urging of small island nations, which fear being swamped by climate-related sea rise if temperatures pass that mark.

"We are flirting dangerously" with the warming limit, said Ambassador Aubrey Webson of Antigua and Barbuda, chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States. "It is small island developing states like ours that will pay the ultimate price if we do not." □

## Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	9							
			6		3	5		7
	7	1	9			8		
	5					2	4	
				9				
	4	2					7	
		4			8	9	3	
6		9	2		5			
							8	

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Difficulty Level ★★★★★

2/27



# Mr. Potato Head drops the mister, sort of



This photo provided by Hasbro shows the new Potato Head world.

By **JOSEPH PISANI**  
AP Retail Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Is it Mr. Potato Head or not? Hasbro created confusion Thursday when it announced that it would drop the "Mr." from the brand's name in order to be more inclusive and so all could feel "welcome in the Potato Head world."

It also said it would sell a new playset this fall without the Mr. and Mrs. designations that will let kids create their own type of potato families, including two moms or two dads.

But in a tweet later that afternoon, Hasbro clarified that while the brand is changing, the actual Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head characters will still live on and be sold in stores. In a picture posted on Twitter, the "Mr." and "Mrs." names are less prominently displayed

Associated Press

played at the bottom of the box, instead of the top. "While it was announced today that the POTATO HEAD brand name & logo are dropping the 'MR.' I yam proud to confirm that MR. & MRS. POTATO HEAD aren't going anywhere and will remain MR. & MRS. POTATO HEAD," the company tweeted.

The tweet came after news of the brand name change exploded on Twitter, with people asking if Barbie will change her name next. "I think Hasbro needs to drop the 'Bro' and just be 'Has,'" another person tweeted.

Hasbro appears to want to have it both ways: expand the brand, while not killing off its most iconic characters, which appeared in the "Toy Story" films.

"They are looking to broaden the franchise," said Robert Passikoff, founder

of marketing consultancy Brand Keys.

"You take the focus of what is essentially one character and now allow it to be a platform for many characters."

Kimberly Boyd, a senior vice president at Hasbro, said the intention of the brand name change was to be more inclusive and to have the characters still live within the Potato Head universe.

"It created a lot of excitement," she said about the reaction.

GLAAD, an LGBTQ advocacy group, applauded the more inclusive Potato playset. □

## Casa del Mar 2BR/2B

Week 2/1113 (16k);  
Week 5/1315 (18k);  
Week 5&6/1521 (20k/Wk.);  
Week 7&8/1408 (18k/Wk.);  
Week 8/1113; 8/1409 (17k/Wk.);  
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\*WK. 52 OV \$49k  
\* Weeks 7 and 14-all views

**GOLD Season**  
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2B Oceanside \$8k  
GV \$5k OV \$7k  
3BEDRM \$13k

## Marriott Aruba Ocean

**PLATINUM Season**  
2 Bed OV \$16500 **Club**  
2B OF \$26k  
1B OV \$9k  
\*\* Destination points \$8 per point

**GOLD Season**  
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2B OV \$9k  
1 Bed \$4k  
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Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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American Airlines	582 2700
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Jet Blue	588 2244
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Alcoholics Anonymous  
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous  
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia  
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes  
Tel. 524 8888

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# Billie Eilish, unfiltered, in new documentary

By **LINDSEY BAHR**  
AP Film Writer

If you're coming to "Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry" hoping for a primer on the music sensation, you've come to the wrong place. Filmmaker R.J. Cutler's two hour and 20-minute documentary about the "Ocean Eyes" singer and songwriter is not biography or reportage. It's a verite-style plunge into her life, her home, her concerts, her process, her Tourette's, her brother's bedroom where they famously write all their songs and even her diary in the year in which she became a star.

It is raw and filled with music — over 20 of her songs are played over the course of the film, including live performances, like her extraordinary Coachella showing in 2019. Some are shown in full. It is also very, very long. Cutler, who also did "The September Issue" and "Be-lushi," cited seminal verite rock docs "Gimme Shelter" and "Don't Look Back" as inspiration. But both of those came a few years and albums into The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan's superstardom. Eilish's ascent is extraordinary and yet she is still in the early part of her artistic and actual life. Fans will certainly disagree, as is their right, but it is an enormous amount of unfiltered space to give to an artist who is still getting started. There's no right or wrong



This image released by Apple TV+ shows Billie Eilish, right, and her brother Finneas O'Connell in a scene from "Billie Eilish: The World's A Little Blurry."

way to make a documentary like this, but for the Eilish curious and not the Eilish die-hards, it's initiation by fire without any context. Clearly someone in Eilish's camp had an eye toward legacy when they invited Cutler to her family home to see if he wanted to follow the then-16-year-old during her breakout year, during which she and her brother Finneas wrote, recorded and released her debut album "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" Eilish is funny and sullen and charismatic and moody, just as you'd want and expect a teenage artist to be.

She gets dreamy and protective of her followers, saying "they're not my fans, they're like part of me" and complains that for her, writing songs is "torture." And she breaks the fourth wall occasionally (she'd told Cutler that she wanted it to be like "The Office") to let the audience know that she knows they're there. Her brother is the driving force a lot of the productivity in their cozy family home in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles (he's since moved out). Their parents homeschooled them and music was always part of their life, with mom, Maggie Baird,

teaching them how to write songs and dad, Patrick O'Connell, teaching instruments. It is interesting to see her and Finneas riff about lyrics and test things out — he has anxiety about having to produce a hit and she couldn't care less — and the juxtaposition of her glamorous appearances and performances with the modest normalcy of their home life. There are some terrific moments that Cutler caught out on the road: In one instance, she meets Katy Perry who introduces Eilish to her fiancé — "a big fan." It's only later that Eilish

realizes that was Orlando Bloom. Her brother reminds her he is "Will Turner from the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' movies." She wants a redo. "I thought he was just some dude," she says. Another is her first meeting with Justin Bieber. She talks about her longstanding obsession in an interview, he gets in touch three days before her album release about wanting to collaborate. (She tells her manager that "he could ask me to kill my dog and I would.") Then at Coachella he appears as she's greeting a hoard of her fans. She freezes and becomes a fan herself. Later she'll sob over a heartfelt message he sends her. And there are some incredibly vulnerable moments too, showing the performer exhausted and annoyed. Eilish remains as unique and enigmatic as she seems from a distance, but also is presented very much like a normal Los Angeles teenager, getting her driver's license, dreaming of a matte black Dodge Challenger and texting with a largely absent boyfriend. Fans will eat up every morsel of this documentary and wish for more. For newcomers, however, it might benefit from watching in installments, which is one of the benefits of the film debuting on Apple TV+. There's even an intermission to help take the guesswork out of where to hit pause. □

Associated Press

# Ta-Nehisi Coates to write new 'Superman' film



Author Ta-Nehisi Coates speaks during the Celebration of the Life of Toni Morrison in New York on Nov. 21, 2019.

Associated Press

By **JAKE COYLE**  
AP Film Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Ta-Nehisi Coates, the acclaimed es-

sayist and novelist who expanded the world of Wakanda for Marvel comics, will write the script for a new "Superman" film from Warner Bros. The studio announced Friday that Coates will pen the screenplay for an upcoming "Superman" film that's early in development. J.J. Abrams will produce. No director or star has yet been announced. "To be invited into the DC Extended Universe by Warner Bros., DC Films and Bad Robot is an honor," said Coates in a statement. "I look forward to meaning-

fully adding to the legacy of America's most iconic mythic hero." Coates is best known as the author of bestsellers including "Between the World and Me," "The Beautiful Struggle" and "We Were Eight Years in Power." Since 2016, he has also penned the Black Panther comics for Marvel, with artist Brian Stelfreeze, a run set to conclude with a final issue in April. He was thanked in the credits of Ryan Coogler's 2018 film "Black Panther." "Ta-Nehisi Coates's 'Between the World and Me' opened a window and

changed the way many of us see the world," said Toby Emmerich, chairman of Warner Bros. Pictures Group. "We're confident that his take on Superman will give fans a new and exciting way to see the Man of Steel." □

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8	4	2	3	5	6	1	7	9
2	1	4	7	6	8	9	3	5
6	8	9	2	3	5	7	1	4
7	3	5	1	4	9	6	8	2

Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 2/27



## WNBA approves Montgomery's role in new Dream ownership group

By **CHARLES ODUM**

AP Sports Writer

**ATLANTA (AP)** — Former Atlanta Dream guard Renee Montgomery made history on Friday as part of a three-member investor group that was approved to purchase the team.

The ownership change follows pressure on former Sen. Kelly Loeffler, a Republican who angered WNBA players with her opposition to the league's racial justice initiatives, to sell her share of the Dream.

Real estate investor Larry Gottesdiener was approved as majority owner of the team. The investor group also includes Montgomery and Suzanne Abair, president of Northland Investment Corp. in Massachusetts, the firm Gottesdiener founded.

Montgomery becomes the first former player to become both an owner and executive of a WNBA franchise. She said she would play an active role with Abair in the leadership of the team.

"I'm going to be working with Suzanne and she's going to lead the way," Montgomery said.

Montgomery said she first began considering her role in an ownership group after Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James tweeted about the possibility of being part of such a group.



Atlanta Dream guard Renee Montgomery (21) passes the ball in the first half of a WNBA basketball game against the Chicago Sky in Atlanta, in this Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2019, file photo.

Associated Press

"That tweet prompted my mind," Montgomery said, adding she "started to figure out if that could become a real possibility."

She said she also was motivated by James' role in the "More Than a Vote" campaign that worked to increase voter turnout and reduce voter suppression in the Black community.

James applauded Montgomery's ownership role by posting on Twitter: "So proud of this Queen. This is everything we are about!" Montgomery sat out the 2020 season to focus on social justice issues and re-

cently announced her retirement from the league after 11 seasons and two WNBA championships.

"I think it's great that Renee has stepped up after she retired from playing the game to continue having an impact on the game," WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said Friday. "I've seen her strong work ethic. I've seen her advocacy and knowledge of the game and I'm sure that's going to be an asset to Larry and Suzanne and a huge benefit to the team."

The 34-year-old Montgomery won WNBA titles with

the Minnesota Lynx in 2015 and 2017. She was an All-Star with the Connecticut Sun in 2011, when she set a career high with her average of 14.6 points per game.

She was the WNBA's Sixth Woman of the Year in 2012. Though his business is based in Newton, Massachusetts, Gottesdiener (pronounced Got-es-DEE-ner) said the team will remain in Atlanta. "This is an Atlanta asset," Gottesdiener said. "The Dream isn't going anywhere."

The WNBA announced on Jan. 20 the ownership

change was close to being completed.

Players around the league had called for Loeffler to sell her 49% stake in the Dream after she wrote a letter to Engelbert over the summer objecting to the league's advocacy for racial justice and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Dream players wore "Vote Warnock" T-shirts in support of Democratic candidate Raphael Warnock, who defeated Loeffler in Georgia's Senate runoff. Warnock's victory, along with Jon Ossoff's win in Georgia's other runoff, handed control of the Senate to Democrats.

The high-profile campaigning against Loeffler by players on a team she owned was credited with boosting Warnock's candidacy.

"I want to take this time to thank the WNBA players, particularly the Dream players," Engelbert said Friday. "They were put in a difficult position. I was proud of the way they handled the situation. They stood for their values, they stood for professionalism. They served as role models with their advocacy and continue to do that."

Gottesdiener said the Dream players captured his attention and respect.

"The last year, the players of the Dream refused to just shut up and dribble," Gottesdiener said. □

## Virus sidelines Raptors coaches, Siakam for Rockets game

By **TIM REYNOLDS**

AP Basketball Writer

The Toronto Raptors were without six members of their coaching staff, including head coach Nick Nurse, and starting forward Pascal Siakam for Friday night's game against Houston in accordance with the NBA's health and safety protocols regarding the coronavirus. Assistant coach Sergio Scariolo was promoted to coach the team's game in Tampa, Florida, against the Rockets. The Raptors said Nurse and the remainder of his staff will continue to work remotely.

Siakam was listed as out about two hours before the

game, indicating that he either has a testing issue or a contact tracing issue. He played Wednesday night in Miami, when the Raptors lost to the Heat.

Scariolo has extensive experience as a head coach, winning championships of leagues in Italy, Spain and Russia, plus has been Spain's national coach — helping that team win medals at the 2012 London Games and 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, plus capture the Basketball World Cup title in 2019.

After Friday, Toronto will have three games left before the All-Star break: games in Tampa against

Chicago on Sunday and Detroit on Tuesday, then at Boston on Thursday. From there, the Raptors have a week off before resuming their season in Tampa against Atlanta on March 11. In addition to Nurse and Scariolo, the other coaches on the Raptors' roster are Adrian Griffin, Jama Mahlalela, Jim Sann and Jon Goodwillie. It was not immediately clear if they all are in the protocols, and who else from the staff would be away from the team as well.

"Anytime we have a positive case, we go through extensive contact tracing, player by player, team



Toronto Raptors coach Nick Nurse talks to players during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Minnesota Timberwolves, Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

staff member by team staff member, and then that independent group makes

that decision as to whether the game should go on," Silver said. □



# Sorenstam waiting to see if rules mistake costs her the cut

**ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)** — Annika Sorenstam shot a 1-under 71 on Friday in her first LPGA Tour event since retiring more than 12 years ago, and then had to wait to see if it was good enough to play the weekend at the Gainbridge LPGA.

Adding to the drama was her score was one shot higher than it should have been because of a bad ruling.

"I did what I could," Sorenstam said. "The goal was to shoot under par and I did, and so that's all I can do." She still was at least 12 shots out of the lead as Lydia Ko posted a 3-under 69 in the morning at Lake Nona and was the early 36-hole leader at 10-under 134. Ko was one shot ahead of Nelly Korda, who had a 68.

Sorenstam, making a one-time appearance because the LPGA Tour is at her home course, finally got some putts to drop and ran off three birdies on her second nine. She finished 36 holes at 2-over 146 and was right on the cut line with half of the field playing in the afternoon.

And that made Friday's penalty stroke loom large. Sorenstam took a triple bogey on the fifth hole of the opening round when her tee shot avoided going out-of-bounds by a fraction. But it was directly un-



Annika Sorenstam chips a shot to the ninth green during the first round of the Gainbridge LPGA golf tournament Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021, in Orlando, Fla.

Associated Press

der the gate of a wrought iron fence, the boundary. She asked about opening the gate but was told a stipulation in the rules didn't allow for that.

So she chose to take a penalty drop, pitched out to the fairway and three-putted from 18 feet in her round of 75.

Turns out that was one of the changes to the modernization of the Rules of Golf in 2019, the largest overhaul ever. The gate now is treated as a movable obstruction — meaning it could be swung open,

provided it was not locked (it wasn't).

The penalty could not be rescinded because Sorenstam played from a different spot.

The rules official, Dan Masselli, was devastated and apologized to Sorenstam after the second round. Sorenstam was not bothered, saying the rules are so new that it's easy to get it wrong in such a quirky situation.

"He wanted to apologize. He said he was wrong. I could have opened the gate and I could've played," Sorenstam said.

"But he said, 'This is going to hurt me. This is eating me inside.' I said, 'Please, please don't feel that way.' I appreciate it. He said, 'I won't make that mistake again.' I said, 'Well, I won't hit there anymore.'

"You know, those things happen. The rules have changed," she said. "That's the way it goes."

Whether she plays two days or four at Lake Nona, the 50-year-old Swede did what she wanted. Sorenstam, who retired after a three-win season in 2008 to start a family, described

this as an appearance, not a comeback. She wanted a little competition as she contemplates playing the U.S. Senior Women's Open this summer, and she said she wouldn't have played an LPGA tour event if it wasn't on her home course. This was not about trying to add to her 72 career victories. But for someone out of competition for nearly as long as her career on the LPGA Tour, she still has ample game.

"The goal was to be a little bit more aggressive. I was at times; not as much as I should have," she said. "Overall, I'm very pleased. A little chip-in there didn't hurt. But yeah, I look at it as a great round. I'm not going to analyze it too much."

The attention shifts to Ko, a former teen prodigy and No. 1 in the world who won her first LPGA Tour event at 15.

Ko has gone nearly three years since her last victory, though her game has been trending upward.

"No matter what happens over the weekend, I think it's good to just keep putting myself in these positions," Ko said. "I think you get more comfortable with it and the more times you're there I think the higher chance that at the end it will all happen for you." □

## French Open winner Swiatek to play Bencic in Adelaide final



Poland's Iga Swiatek hits a forehand return during her fourth round match against Romania's Simona Halep at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Sunday, Feb. 14, 2021.

Associated Press

**ADELAIDE, Australia (AP)**

— French Open champion Iga Swiatek is into the Adelaide International final against second-seeded Belinda Bencic after a 6-3, 6-2 win over Jil Teichmann. Bencic advanced later Friday with a 7-6 (2), 6-7 (4), 6-2 win over American teenager Coco Gauff in 2 hours, 45 minutes. Bencic ended Gauff's victory streak at five — three in the main draw and two in qualifying.

Fifth-seeded Swiatek was dominant in the opening set, breaking the Swiss left-hander's serve in the fourth game. The 19-year-old Swiatek bothered her

opponent with a series of powerful groundstrokes as Teichmann made 13 unforced errors in the first set. Teichmann failed to convert a break point in the fourth game of the second set — her only one of the match — and it was a turning point.

Swiatek held serve, then broke the unseeded Teichmann's serve the next two times to keep her perfect record for the tournament — she has not lost a set.

"I feel solid and that is the most important thing for me because when I play good I just enjoy everything," Swiatek said. □